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ABSTRACT

One of the goals for volunteers in the Peace Corps of the United States is to teach U.S. citizens about the people and culture of their host countries. World Wise Schools promotes this goal by matching current Peace Corps volunteers with 3rd through 12th grade classes throughout the United States in information exchanges. This guide is designed to support teachers in exchanges with Peace Corps volunteers by introducing students to basic concepts of perceptions, stereotyping, and culture. The readings and activities of the guide, which have been written primarily for intermediate level classes, will help students to: (1) recognize differences in perception; (2) identify stereotypes and practice strategies for reducing stereotypes; and (3) define culture and recognize its role in developing perceptions of one's self and others. The guide includes teacher background readings, activity ideas, and student worksheets. A 33-item list of resources is included. (DB)

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Looking at Ourselves and Others

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Looking at Ourselves and Others

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Introduction

The Peace Corps of the United States

The Peace Corps of the United States was created when President John F. Kennedy issued an Executive Order on March 1, 1961. Since that time, Volunteers have helped people in other countries develop their skills to fight hunger, disease, poverty, and lack of opportunity. In return, Volunteers have seen themselves, their country, and the world from a new perspective.

Peace Corps, seeking to promote world peace and friendship, has three goals:

1. To help the people of interested countries meet their needs for trained men and women;

2. To help promote a better understanding of the people of the United States on the part of the people served; and,

3. To promote a better understanding of other people on the part of the people of the United States.

Since the first group of Volunteers arrived in Ghana, West Africa, in 1961, over 140,000 United States citizens have served as Peace Corps Volunteers in more than 100 countries. Although programs vary from country to country based on the nation's needs and requests, Volunteers traditionally offer skills in the areas of education, agriculture, business, engineering, community development, natural resources, and health. Recent program additions have included environmental education, special education, and the development of programs aimed at improving the status of women and their families. Before placement at their sites, Volunteers receive training in the language and culture of their host countries, as well as in specific technical skills. Cross-cultural training, which includes the study of the history, customs, and values of the host country, prepares Volunteers to become part of a local community for the duration of their two-year service.

Today, over 6,000 Peace Corps Volunteers are working in over 90 countries around the globe. Although the average age of Volunteers in 1961 was twenty-two, today it is approximately thirty-one; in fact, one out of eight current Volunteers is over the age of fifty! By living and working within their local communities, Peace Corps Volunteers not only learn about the people of their host country, but also offer people around the world a chance to learn first hand about the people of the United States.

Volunteers also care about carrying out the third goal of Peace Corps: teaching citizens of the United States about the people and culture of their host countries. World Wise Schools promotes the third goal of Peace Corps by matching current Volunteers with third through twelfth grade classes throughout the United States in an information exchange. Begun in 1989, the program promotes geographic and

cross-cultural awareness while developing the spirit of volunteerism. Today over 3000 classes from all fifty states are enrolled in the program.

When Peace Corps Volunteers return from overseas, they bring with them an intimate knowledge of other peoples and cultures. They understand that the ability of the United States to function in the world community depends on its understanding of other cultures. They know that global interdependence is a reality, not just a catchword. When Volunteers share their experiences with their World Wise classes, they help others to fashion a broader world view.

Goals of *Looking at Ourselves and Others*

While people all over the world share such things as basic physical needs and a common environment, there are great differences among us as well. As your students become acquainted with the people with whom your Peace Corps Volunteer lives and works, it will be essential for them to recognize that individuals and groups hold different views of the world, and that many of these differences are a result of culture. They will need to suspend judgment as their initial stereotypes are challenged by new and more personal information -- and they will need to constantly apply the lessons they learn to their own lives.

Looking at Ourselves and Others, a revision of an earlier World Wise Schools publication of the same name, has been designed to support your exchange with your Peace Corps Volunteer by introducing students to basic concepts of perceptions, stereotyping, and culture. The readings and activities in this guide, which have been written primarily for intermediate level classes, allow students to:

1. Recognize differences in perception;

2. Identify stereotypes and practice strategies for reducing stereotypes;

3. Define culture and recognize its role in developing perceptions of ourselves and others.

The guide, which has been arranged by topic, includes teacher background readings, activity ideas, and student worksheets. Teachers are encouraged to select or adapt the materials which are appropriate for their students.

This packet contains materials written by Peace Corps Volunteers and others that represent their individual views. These views are not official opinions of the United States Government or of the Peace Corps of the United States.

Please note that this study guide is not accompanied by a videotape.

Part 1: Perceptions, Facts, and Opinions

Background Information for Teachers

Activity Ideas

Worksheets

Background Information for Teachers

Faulty Generalizations

Differentiating between fact and opinion, and discriminating between faulty and accurate generalizations are skills that must be included in any study of prejudice and stereotyping. The following discussion of faulty generalizations is from *Reducing Adolescent Prejudice* by Nina H. Gabelko and J. Michaelis (New York: Teachers College Press, 1981). Reprinted with permission.

Faulty generalizations are errors in thinking. Not only do these errors in thinking prevent people from making wise decisions, but they also frequently lead to stereotyped and prejudiced thinking. . . . The exercises below give definitions and examples of each of three kinds of faulty generalizations.

Generalizing Faulty Statements

If a statement is untrue, or only partially true (true in some cases, but not true in others), then the statement cannot be generalized. Generalizing such untrue, or partially true, statements is frequently the basis of stereotyping.

Example A: *Pretty women are not intelligent. She is a pretty woman. Do not hire her because she is not intelligent.*

Physical appearance and intelligence are not related to one another. A person can be attractive and intelligent, or attractive and unintelligent. Knowing about one of the characteristics will not give any information about the other since the original statement is untrue. Therefore, any generalization of the statement "Pretty women are not intelligent" cannot be true.

Example B: *Younger children are smaller than older children. Fred is smaller than John. Therefore, John must be older than Fred.*

Frequently, though not always, younger children are smaller than older children. This statement is only partially true, since it is true sometimes but is untrue other times. Therefore, any generalization of the statement "Younger children are smaller than older children" may or may not be true. Such a generalization is faulty because it cannot be relied upon.

Faulty Cause-and-Effect Generalizations

When two events follow one another it may be true that the first event caused the second event. However, this is only a possibility. The first event may not have caused the second event. Generalizations based upon such a faulty cause-and-effect relationship are also faulty.

Example A: *I am always hungry at lunch time. I sure am hungry now. Since I am hungry, it must be lunch time.*

While I am always hungry at lunch time, my being hungry does not cause it to be lunch time. My being hungry can be caused by many other conditions as well. For example, it may be breakfast time, dinner time, snack time, or I just might not have eaten enough at my last meal. I cannot make a cause-and-effect relationship when the condition can be caused by any one of many things. Therefore, this is a faulty cause-and-effect generalization.

Example B: *The police are always called when there is a bank robbery. There are police officers inside the bank. There must have been a bank robbery.*

Police officers *are* usually in a bank after a bank robbery. But the reverse is not necessarily true, since police officers can be in the bank for many other reasons. For example, they might be cashing a check or making a bank deposit. Since the police officers can be in the bank for any of a number of reasons, including investigating a bank robbery, this is a faulty cause-and-effect generalization.

Unrepresentative Generalizations

Examining or deciding an issue on the basis of only one aspect of the issue is called making an unrepresentative generalization. This is so because the part of "the whole picture" being used as the basis of the generalization does not represent "the whole picture" as it really is. Therefore, the generalization cannot be accurate.

Example A:

The *Literary Digest* was considered to be an important and up-to-date magazine. The publishers of the magazine saw that survey research was the trend of the future and felt that they could scoop the rest of the magazines and newspapers by predicting the outcome of the upcoming presidential election through the use of survey research.

They used a scientifically designed method called random sampling to select names of people from the telephone book. To these selected people *Literary Digest's* staff mailed questionnaires that the people were to answer and mail back to the magazine. From this the magazine would predict the outcome of the 1936 presidential election.

The survey indicated that President Roosevelt would not only fail to be re-elected, but that he would lose by a "landslide." The members of the staff were sure

that they had the news story of the century. They were so sure of themselves that they ran a huge story on it, staking their reputation on an election loss for President Roosevelt.

Of course, we know that President Roosevelt won his bid for re-election in 1936 with a huge majority. The *Literary Digest* had put its reputation on the line and lost. They went out of business. How could they have been so sure that they were right, when they were so wrong? Did taking a poll based on the responses of people whose names were in the telephone book allow the poll takers to see "the whole picture?" Or were they only limited to one part of the "picture"?

> Who would have been included in the telephone book? In 1936 very few middle-income people, and no low-income people, had telephones. During the Depression, most of the country would have considered a telephone a luxury. This means that no matter how "scientifically" the random sample was taken, the survey could only poll those who were rich enough to have a telephone. The rest of the population was "out of the picture." The *Literary Digest* survey was based on an unrepresentative generalization and was, therefore, a faulty generalization. It should have included all parts of the voting public, so all groups and views could have been polled.

Example B:

The football coach at Central High is also the school activities coordinator. He wanted to know what kind of support there would be for the school picnic, so he asked all of the members of the football team whether or not they were planning on attending the picnic. Only ten-percent of the football players said that they were going to attend.

The coach canceled the picnic because ten-percent attendance was just too poor a showing to warrant reserving the picnic grounds. He scolded the school council for not gathering more support for the school activity.

> Asking members of one particular group whether or not they intend to go to the picnic does not give "the whole picture." There may well be other groups of students who do intend to support the school activity and go to the picnic. One group does not necessarily represent the whole student body. The coach made a faulty generalization because he supposed that everyone felt the same way about the picnic as the football players did. The rest of the students may or may not have agreed. The coach should have looked at "the whole picture" before making a generalization. Since he did not, he made a faulty generalization.

[Distinguishing between accurate and faulty generalizations is a complex skill, but one that is essential to the process of reducing prejudice.]

Activity Ideas

Perceptions, Facts, and Opinions

To appreciate your Peace Corps Volunteer's experience, students need to understand that there are many different ways to view the world. Some of these differences are based on culture, while others are based on a combination of culture and personality. Your Volunteer is a unique individual who comes to the Peace Corps with a set of experiences and perceptions that may differ significantly -- or not at all -- from those of another Volunteer in the same region or country.

Recognizing that individuals can perceive the same events differently prepares students for understanding the broader concept of cultural differences. The following activities introduce the idea of individual differences in perception and differences between facts and opinions.

1. People Perceive Differently (no worksheet)

Background Information:

The following activity illustrates the idea that people can have different perceptions of the same phenomenon, (i.e., things, people, events). It has been adapted with permission from materials produced by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith in *The Prejudice Book* by David Shiman (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1979).

Activity Idea:

1. Present the class with some simple object in the room, such as a chair. Ask students to write down five words or phrases that describe the object.

2. Share descriptions. Point out that even when asked to describe something as simple as a chair, different students notice different things. Stress that none of the observations is wrong -- the observations are simply different.

3. Ask students what words or phrases these people might use if they were asked to describe this chair: the school maintenance person, a carpenter, a grandparent, the school financial officer, a preschooler, someone who has never seen a chair. What factors influence what we see?

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4. Ask your Peace Corps Volunteer about the things that influence the way he or she sees things in his or her host country.

Activity Variations:

- Show the students a large picture of a country or city scene, sports event, etc. from a magazine or book (or project a slide of such an event on a screen). Ask students to list three things about the picture that are important (or interesting) to them. Rank these items in order of importance. Have students share their lists with the class, explaining the thinking behind their choices. Stress that no one is right or wrong -- the observations are just different. Ask students to explain how this activity relates to the chair activity. Discuss how it relates to the information in your Peace Corps Volunteer's letters.

- After doing the activity variation, ask students to quietly think about their responses to the following questions. After a few minutes of silence, have students share their ideas with a partner. Afterwards, discuss the responses as a class. (This strategy will be referred to as "think, pair, and share.")

    a. What advantages are there to everyone perceiving things and people in the same way? What disadvantages are there (in solving problems, for example)?
    b. Would you want to live in a world in which we all saw things the same way? Or in which we all saw things differently? Why?

- Tell students that they are going to practice being good observers while visiting another part of the school. They will not be allowed to talk or interact with those being observed. Have students quietly stand and observe another classroom or part of the school for three to five minutes. Return to class, and ask students to record five activities he or she observed. Discuss the similarities and differences among observations. What reasons can you give for the differences? What would one of your parents, a school maintenance person, or a school principal have observed? Why would their observations be similar to and different from yours?

2. How Wrong You Are! (no worksheet)

Background Information:

The following activity from *The Prejudice Book* by David Shiman (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1979) helps students recognize the link between the accuracy of their perceptions of other people, and their knowledge of those people. Reprinted with permission.

Activity Idea:

1. Pair the students in the class so that some are with good friends and some are with students they hardly know.

2. Assign the task:
   Make a list of five things you think that your partner likes (e.g., favorite color, activities, music, food, and so on). Make a second list of five things that you yourself like. Don't show the lists to your partner.

3. Ask students to compare both lists with their partner's lists.

4. As a class, discuss:

   a. Was the list you drew up for your partner different from his or her own list?
   b. Which group of students have the more similar lists -- the pairs of friends or the pairs of acquaintances?
   c. Why were some pairs' lists more similar than others?
   d. What is the lesson to be learned from this activity?
   e. How might this lesson be applied to our study of people in our Peace Corps Volunteer's country?

5. Ask your Volunteer how his or her first impressions of the people in his or her village have changed. What changed these perceptions?

3. The Elderly -- Youth (p. 16)
The Woman (p. 17)

Background Information:

This activity, which demonstrates the role of predisposition in perception, has appeared in many books on communication, perception, and psychology. This particular version is from *From the Field: Tested Participatory Activities for Trainers* compiled by Catherine Crone and Carman St. John Hunter (New York: World Education, 1980). Adapted with permission.

Activity Idea:

1. Photocopy enough copies of "The Elderly -- Youth" for half of your class. Cut the copies so that you have one set of "The Elderly" and another set of "Youth."

2. Divide the class into an equal number of groups of three to five students. Select discussion leaders and recorders.

3. Give half of the groups the discussion guide "The Elderly" and the other half "Youth." (Do not tell the students that there are different sheets.)

4. Allow five to ten minutes for group discussion.

5. Come back together as a class, but do not go over the discussion questions.

6. Assign task:
   In a few moments I will be showing you a drawing. Without comparing your ideas with your friends, write down what you see.

7. Show the picture of "The Woman," giving students a few minutes to gather their impressions.

8. Think, pair, and share (see page nine) in response to these questions :
   a. What did you see?
   b. Is there any relationship between the topic you discussed in your group, and what was seen? How could we find that out?
   c. What relationship is there between what we expect to see and what we do see?
   d. What lesson can we learn from this activity?
   e. How can we apply this lesson to the study of our Peace Corps Volunteer's host country?

4. The Rumor Clinic (no worksheet)

Background Information:

This activity, which illustrates the idea of "selective perception," is based upon experiments conducted by Allport and Postman in the United States in the 1940s. This particular version of "The Rumor Clinic" is reprinted with permission from *Teaching about Cultural Awareness* by Gary Smith and George Otero (Denver: Center for Teaching International Relations, University of Denver, 1989).

Activity Idea:

1. Find an action picture in a current magazine.

2. Choose six students to be reporters, assigning them each a number from one through six. Choose one student to be door keeper. Send the six reporters out of the room, and tell them that they will now have a chance to see what happens to a story as it is told and retold.

3. Explain the activity to the rest of the class, saying something like this:

This is a demonstration of how a rumor grows as it travels. Six volunteers have been picked to act as reporters. They are now out in the hall. I will show you and <u>one</u> of the reporters a picture which you and he (or she) will carefully study. After you and reporter number one have studied the picture, we will call in the second reporter. Reporter number one will tell reporter number two as much as he (or she) can remember about the picture. After that, reporter number two will repeat the story to reporter number three, and so on, until each reporter has had a chance to tell the story. As the report is passed on from person to person, your job will be to listen to how the story changes as it is passed along. Write down any changes you hear. After the reporters have finished, we will discuss what happened and why.

4. Show the group and reporter number one the picture (about sixty seconds of exposure to the picture will do).

5. Hide the picture, then call in reporter number two. Ask reporter number one to describe the picture to reporter number two. Caution the rest of the class not to laugh, comment, or coach the reporters in any way while they are talking. When they have finished their turns, the reporters may return to their seats.

6. After each reporter has had a chance to tell the story, share the picture. Discuss:
   a. What happened?
   b. Why did the story change as it was retold
   c. Can you think of a time in your life when this really happened?
   d. Why do people spread rumors? Are rumors harmful? Why?
   e. How do people usually begin rumors (e.g., *Guess what I heard, So-and-So said...*)
   f. What can you say so that someone will not tell you their rumor?
   g. How does this activity apply to us? to our Peace Corps Volunteer?

7. Ask your Peace Corps Volunteer about his or her experience with rumors. Was anyone hurt? How?

5. Is That a Fact? (p. 18)

Background Information:

Understanding the difference between facts and opinions, and differentiating between false and accurate generalizations are skills that are critical to the study of prejudice and stereotypes. Choose the introductory activity described below which is most appropriate to the interests and skill level of your students. Reinforce the skill using content from readily available textbooks, magazines, and newspapers, as well as from your Peace Corps Volunteer's letters.

Activity Idea:

1. Write three examples of facts on one side of the board, and three examples of opinions on the other of the board.

   Examples of facts: *George has blue eyes.*
   This room has four windows.
   There are fifty states in the United States.

   Examples of opinions: *This room is too warm.*
   Math class is boring.
   The best cars are made in the United States.

2. Ask students to identify the statements of fact and the statements of opinion. Label each group.

3. Have students work with partners to come up with definitions for the words "fact" and "opinion." Choose a class definition, using a dictionary if necessary.

4. Have students add to the list of examples from "Is That a Fact?" or with statements of information about themselves (hair color, height, etc.) or your school.

5. Discuss:
   a. Why is it important to know if something is a fact or an opinion?
   b. What makes it difficult to decide if something is a fact or an opinion?
   c. Who decides whether something is fact or opinion?
   d. If you're not sure if something is a fact, what can you do?
   e. Are facts in science class different from facts in social studies class?

6. After reviewing the meaning of "fact" and "opinion," have students watch one or more of the Peace Corps' *Destination* videotapes. Ask students to listen for and record three to five facts and three to five opinions as they watch the tape(s). Compare responses in small groups. Create a class list of "Facts about _____" and "Opinions about _____."

7. Photocopy two or three pages from your Peace Corps Volunteer's letters. Have students work in small groups to find examples of facts (about your Volunteer's host country), opinions, and statements that need more information. Have each group write a letter to your Volunteer asking for the additional information they need.

Activity Variation:

1. Take examples of ten to fifteen facts and opinions from books that students are currently using, from your Peace Corps Volunteer's letters, or from "Is that a Fact?" Write each statement on an individual strip of paper, and then tape the strips to the center of the chalkboard (or arrange the students' chairs in a circle, and spread the strips out on the floor).

2. Label one side of the board (or circle) "Facts," the opposite side of the board (or circle) "Opinions," and the middle of the board (or circle) "Need More Information." Have students work as a group to literally place the statements into the appropriate categories. After all statements have been categorized, evaluate the statements in the "Need More Information" category.

3. Ask students if anybody or any group outside of their class would disagree with the way the class has categorized the statements. If you have not already done so, discuss the questions posed in number five of the activity idea.

4. Ask students to work in pairs to either come up with or revise definitions for the words "fact" and "opinion." Ask students to explain what a fact is not.

6. How Accurate Is It? (p. 19)

Background Information:

According to Webster, to generalize is "to derive or induce (a general concept or principle) from particulars." Because we can't possibly treat every object, person, or event as unique, we generalize in order to function smoothly in the world. For example, if we didn't generalize that "moving cars can hurt people," but rather treated every moving car as a new experience, we might not live very long.

"How Accurate Is It?" introduces students to the difficult concept of generalization so that they will challenge generalizations made about people, insist on knowing the evidence that substantiates them, and be willing to modify their own generalizations when confronted by evidence showing them to be false. It is important for students to understand that almost all generalizations -- particularly those about people -- need to be qualified. Adapted with permission from *The Prejudice Book* by David Shiman, (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1979).

Activity Idea:

1. Explain the meaning of "general" and "specific" using objects in the room or pictures to illustrate your point (e.g., "This horse is black" versus "All horses are black"). Write an example of a generalization on the board (e.g., "Snakes are harmful").

2. Have students label a half-sheet of paper one through eight. Ask students if the statement on the board is true or false. Have them "secretly" write "true" or "false" next to number one on their papers. Ask students questions two through eight, having them record "yes" or "no" next to the appropriate number on their papers. (Remember that number one has already been answered.)

    2. Are *all or almost all* snakes harmful?
    3. Are *most* snakes harmful?

4. Are *many* snakes harmful?
5. Are *some* snakes harmful?
6. Are *a few* snakes harmful?
7. *Do you know* about snakes?
8. Is the statement "Snakes are harmful" true or false?

3. As a class, discuss:

   a. Who has different answers for numbers one and eight? What made you change your answer?
   b. What words can you add to the statement "Snakes are harmful" to make it more accurate? (e.g., *some* snakes, *many* snakes, *a few* snakes in Asia, etc.)
   c. What can you add to the statement to show that you don't know very much about snakes? (*as far as I know, I'm not sure, in my experience,* etc.)

4. Use the worksheet "How Accurate Is it?" to practice evaluating the accuracy of generalizations.

5. Have students work in pairs to rewrite each statement (using the phrases discussed in number three) so that it is as accurate as possible.

6. Have students use think, pair, and share (see page nine) in discussing the following questions:

   a. Which statements were more difficult to evaluate -- the statements about things, or the statements about people?
   b. What words can be used to make statements more accurate?
   c. What lesson can be learned from this activity?
   d. How might we apply this lesson to things we say and write about our Peace Corps Volunteer's country?

Activity Variation:

- Watch one or more Peace Corps *Destination* videotapes. Ask students to listen for and record the qualified statements in the videotape. (Example: "Most people in Honduras live in the mountains.") Discuss: Why is it important to use qualified statements?

The Elderly

Directions: Carefully read the following questions and with your group brainstorm a list of creative responses. You will have five minutes for this task.

How old will you be in the year 2050? With your group, brainstorm a list of the ways in which your life will be similar to and different from the way it is now. What will be your greatest problem? smallest problem? Why?

Youth

Directions: Carefully read the following questions and with your group brainstorm a list of creative responses. You will have five minutes for this task.

Imagine that you are a young woman growing up in the 1860s. With your group, brainstorm a list of the ways in which your life would be similar to and different from the way it is now. What would be your greatest problem? Smallest problem? Why?

Adapted with permission from *From the Field: Tested Participatory Activities for Trainers* compiled by Catherine D. Crone and Carman St. John Hunter, New York: World Education, 1980.

THE WOMAN

Source: Originally drawn by W. E. Hill and appearing in *Puck* on 6th November, 1905, this drawing has been used many times since as an "ambiguous figure" for psychological purposes.

Is That a Fact?

A **fact** is a statement that can be proven by evidence. An **opinion** is a belief about something that cannot be proven true or false by any kind of evidence.* Can you tell the difference between a fact and an opinion? Read each statement carefully, then put an F before each statement that is a fact and an O before each statement that is an opinion.

_____ 1. Girls are smarter than boys.

_____ 2. Columbus discovered America in 1492.

_____ 3. Americans are happier than people in most other countries.

_____ 4. There are more white than black people in this country.

_____ 5. Men are usually taller than women.

_____ 6. The world is a better place to live in now than it was one hundred years ago.

_____ 7. White people are in the minority in the world.

_____ 8. There is more freedom in the United States than in any other country.

_____ 9. Today is a beautiful day.

_____ 10. Most people in Africa are black.

_____ 11. This is the best school in the whole town.

_____ 12. The United States is one of the richest countries in the world.

_____ 13. Women make better teachers than men.

_____ 14. Most people in Honduras are unhappy.

_____ 15. The President of the United States is a democrat.

*Definitions are from *Windows on Our World: The Way People Live* by M. Branson, Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1976. Activity has been adapted with permission from *The Prejudice Book* by David A. Shiman, New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1979.

How Accurate Is It?

Directions: Read each statement carefully, then ask yourself the following questions.
Are *all (or almost all)* baseballs (or elephants, etc.) white (strong, etc.)?
Are *most* baseballs (or elephants, etc.) white (strong, etc.)?
Are *some* . . . ?
Are *a few* . . . ?
Do you know about . . . ?
Put a check in the box that shows how accurate each statement is.

Statement **How Accurate It Is**

	all or almost all	most	many	some	few	don't know
1. Baseballs are white.						
2. Elephants are strong.						
3. Fish have gills.						
4. Spiders are poisonous.						
5. Candy is bad for your teeth.						
6. Babies cry.						
7. Politicians are dishonest.						
8. Teachers are smarter than children.						
9. Americans are rich.						
10. Poor people are lazy.						

From *The Prejudice Book* by D. Shiman, New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1979. Reprinted with permission.

Part 2: Recognizing and Reducing Stereotypes

Background Information for Teachers

Activity Ideas

Worksheets

Background Information for Teachers

Stereotyping

> A stereotype is a mental picture. It asserts that all people in a particular group behave like everyone else in the group. . . . Stereotyping can cause problems because it ignores the differences among people in the same group. People just aren't the same. . . . Stereotypes distort the truth. They suggest that all people who share a particular characteristic act in the same way. . . .
>
> - Gary Smith

The following reading on how stereotyping works is from *Teaching about Cultural Awareness* by Gary Smith and George Otero (Denver: Center for Teaching International Relations, University of Denver, 1989). Compare it with the second excerpt which is from Gordon Allport's classic work *The Nature of Prejudice*. Reprinted with permission.

Stereotypes affect what we think and believe about others as well as how we behave towards them. These images allow us to treat people in certain groups differently than we would if our thinking were less rigid, more tentative. Stereotyping often serves as a substitute for thinking. We often tend to use them to avoid contact with those people we perceive as being "fundamentally" different from us. "You know how _____ are; you wouldn't want to associate with one, would you?" Such a statement illustrates how stereotyping operates. According to the stereotype, it would be senseless to interact with a _____ because "We all know what they're like anyway."

A note of caution: there is a critical difference between categorizing and stereotyping. Because of the amount of information we have to assimilate, categorizing is necessary. It is a way to reduce and simplify an otherwise impossibly complex world. Stereotypes (as we mean them in this program) go beyond the functionality of thinking in categories. They are beliefs about people in categories that lessen the chances of interaction and diminish the potential for recognizing and accepting differences. If we conclude, for example, that because someone has red hair he is quick-tempered, then we are evaluating him on the basis of a stereotype. "Redhead" is a category.

Stereotype formation seems to be influenced in two basic ways: (1) the type of information we receive about a group, (2) our predispositions and preconditioning (attitudes) about the group. ("The Woman" activity [in the section on perceptions] brings out the role of preconditioning.) It would be possible for us to break through

many of the more dysfunctional aspects of stereotyping if "new" information were introduced to us about the group that is stereotyped.

It is only a possibility that stereotypic thinking will change, however. Whenever humans hold rigid beliefs about others and there seem to be payoffs in holding these beliefs, there is a strong tendency to simply disregard "new" diverse information about a group. Such an investment in one's beliefs leads to selectively perceiving information that reinforces the beliefs. ("Rumor Clinic" demonstrates to students how selective perception works.) Much of this process occurs at an unconscious level. At a minimum, it would be beneficial to examine how this process operates within each of us.

Finally, our stereotypes say far more about us than they do about those people we are stereotyping. When we state a judgment or opinion, it is ours. It does not describe reality -- it is only our rather biased assessment of reality. ["The ____ people are lazy"] says much more about persons holding that view than it does about [the people under discussion.] Accordingly, this section can provide a good means for examining what we believe and why we believe it.

The Dangers of Labels

The following reading from pages 178-181 of Gordon W. Allport's work *The Nature of Prejudice* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1954, 1979) explores the relationship between language and prejudice. Note that some words referring to ethnic groups have been changed to reflect the times. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

In the empirical world of human beings there are some two and a half billion grains of sand corresponding to our category "the human race." We cannot possibly deal with so many separate entities in our thoughts, nor can we individualize even among the hundreds whom we encounter in our daily round. We must group them, form clusters. We welcome, therefore, the names that help us to perform the clustering.

The most important property of a noun is that it brings many grains of sand into a single pail, disregarding the fact that the same grains might have fitted just as appropriately into another pail. To state the matter technically, a noun abstracts

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from a concrete reality some one feature and assembles different concrete realities only with respect to this one feature. The very act of classifying forces us to overlook all other features, many of which might offer a sounder basis than the rubric we select. . . .

Some labels, such as "blind man," are exceedingly salient and powerful. They tend to prevent alternative classification, or even cross-classification. Ethnic labels [e.g., Asian American, African American] are often of this type, particularly if they refer to some highly visible feature. . . . They resemble the labels that point to some outstanding incapacity -- *cripple, blind man*. Let us call such symbols "labels of primary potency." These symbols act like shrieking sirens, deafening us to all finer discriminations that we might otherwise perceive. Even though the blindness of one man and the darkness of pigmentation of another may be defining attributes for some purposes, they are irrelevant and "noisy" for others.

Most people are unaware of this basic law of language -- that every label applied to a given person refers properly only to one aspect of his nature. You may correctly say that a certain man is *human, a philanthropist, a Chinese, a physician, an athlete.* A given person may be all of these; but the chances are that *Chinese* stands out in your mind as the symbol of primacy potency. Yet neither this nor any other classificatory label can refer to the whole of a man's nature. (Only his proper name can do so.)

Thus each label we use, especially those of primary potency, distracts our attention from concrete reality. The living, breathing, complex individual -- the ultimate unit of human nature -- is lost to sight. The label magnifies one attribute out of all proportion to its true significance, and masks other important attributes of the individual. . . .

The anthropologist, Margaret Mead, has suggested that labels of primary potency lose some of their force when they are changed from nouns to adjectives. To speak of an African American soldier, a Catholic teacher, or a Jewish artist calls attention to the fact that some other group classifications are just as legitimate as the racial or religious. If George Johnson is spoken of not only as an African American but also as a *soldier*, we have at least two attributes to know him by, and two are more accurate than one. To depict him truly as an individual, of course, we should have to name many more attributes. It is a useful suggestion that we designate ethnic and religious membership where possible with *adjectives* rather than with *nouns*.

Activity Ideas

Recognizing and Reducing Stereotypes

Reducing stereotypes involves many skills: discriminating between facts and opinions, differentiating between faulty and accurate generalizations, and being able to recognize stereotypes in one's own and others' speech. It also involves such skills as recognizing the uniqueness and worth of people, practicing empathy, and being able to counter the prejudicial statements of others. Use the following activities to introduce these ideas to your students. Note: Be sure to thoroughly "debrief" after each activity.

1. The Egg People (pp. 33-34)
What Is Prejudice? (pp. 35-36)

Background Information:

"The Egg People," a story from *Read* magazine, dramatically illustrates the unfairness of prejudice. Its companion piece, "What Is Prejudice?", explains the terms "prejudice" and "scapegoating" and describes prejudice's function. Reprinted with permission of *Read* magazine (Middletown, Connecticut: Field Publications, February 1979).

Activity Idea:

1. Read aloud the entire story "The Egg People." As a class or in small groups, discuss:

   a. What happened in the story?
   b. Describe the relationship between the Egg People and the Flatfolk.
   c. Were all Egg People alike?
   d. What happened to the boy who tried to be different? Why?
   e. How did this story make you feel?
   f. Is this a true story?
   g. What do you call it when people are judged because of where they're from or the way they look, rather than for what they do or say?
   h. Could this story ever really happen? Why or why not?
   i. What is the purpose of this story?
   j. Can you think of a time when someone you know (or have read about) was treated badly just because he or she belonged to a particular group? Why did it happen? What can be done so it doesn't happen?

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2. Distribute copies of "What Is Prejudice?" and have students read for the meaning of the words "prejudice" and "scapegoating."

3. Use think, pair, and share (see page nine) to respond to the following questions:

    a. What is meant by the sentence "prejudice is learned"?
    b. Why is it important to know that prejudice is learned?
    c. What is the "purpose" of prejudice?
    d. What are the disadvantages of "prejudging" someone?
    e. How is it harmful to the person who is prejudged? to everyone?

4. If appropriate for your students, introduce the story of someone like Anne Frank and read excerpts from her diary.

5. Ask your Volunteer what is being done by individuals or groups in his or her country to reduce prejudice.

Activity Variations:

- Have students follow along as you read aloud the first part of the story. Have them work individually or with a partner to write an ending to the story. Share the students' endings, then, if you choose, read the way the author of the story ended the tale ("The Egg People -- The Ending"). Discuss the questions in "Think About It."

- Ask students to rewrite the story from the point of view of the Flatfolk. How does this version compare with the original story?

- Ask students to rewrite the story as if it were a play or a puppet show. Perform the show for another class. Because it is such a moving story, be sure to discuss it with the audience afterwards.

2. People Tags (p. 37)

Background Information:

> "People Tags" is a two-part activity that illustrates the importance of gathering information before making judgments about people. Reprinted with permission from *Cultural Insight and Insight: Dealing with Diverse Viewpoints and Values* by Gary Smith (New York: Global Perspectives in Education [American Forum for Global Education], 1979).

Activity Idea:

1. Prepare for the lesson by making one copy of "People Tags" for every three students. Cut off the fact cards and keep them for the second part of the activity.

2. Divide students into groups of three. Give each group a set of people cards (Uncle Fred, Aunt Jennifer, etc.) and object cards (dictionary, wall clock, etc.). Do not give out the fact cards yet.

3. Assign the task:
   You are doing your holiday shopping for Uncle Fred, who rides in a motorcycle gang, Aunt Jennifer, a librarian, Cousin George, a Navy man, and Great-Aunt Phyllis, a senior citizen. From the collection in front of you, which gifts would you choose for each?

4. After five minutes, discuss:

   a. Who gave Uncle Fred the leather jacket? . . . Aunt Jennifer the eyeglass chain? Cousin George the tattoo? . . . Great-aunt Phyllis the rocking chair? Why?
   b. How did you decide who would get each gift?
   c. How did the labels (i.e., "senior citizen," "librarian") influence your decisions?

5. Pass out the fact cards commenting that perhaps the students need more information before making their final gift choices.

6. Give students from three to five minutes to "re-assign" gifts.

7. As a class, discuss:

   a. Who changed their gift ideas? Why?
   b. What is the purpose of this activity?
   c. How does knowing a person change the way we think about him or her?
   d. How can we apply this activity to our study of the people in our Peace Corps Volunteer's country?

Activity Variation:

- Have students make people, gift, and fact cards of their own. Discuss: How does knowing an individual change the way we think about them?

3. Prejudice and Language (pp. 38-39)

Background Information:

> This essay reviews the concepts of labels, stereotypes, and generalizations, and prepares students to investigate the role of the media in making or breaking stereotypes. Reprinted with permission from *Read* magazine (Middletown, Connecticut: Field Publications, 1979).

Activity Idea:

1. Review the meaning of *labels*, *stereotypes*, and *generalizations*. After reading "Prejudice

and Language," have students work in cooperative groups on the activity ideas at the end of the reading.

2. Share the results of the groups' investigations with other classes, perhaps with a display or a panel discussion.

3. Ask your Peace Corps Volunteer about the role of the media in making or breaking stereotypes in his or her host country.

4. Watch It! (p. 40)
Another Point of View (p. 41)

Background Information:

> Older students may benefit from this in-depth investigation of the role of television in making or breaking stereotypes. "Watch It!" has been adapted with permission from *Teaching about Cultural Awareness* by Gary Smith and George Otero (Denver: Center for Teaching International Relations, University of Denver, 1989).

Activity Idea:

1. Review the meaning of the words *stereotype* and *ethnic group*. Divide the class into investigative teams of three to five students. Assign the task:
   You are going to study the way various ethnic and racial groups are portrayed on popular television shows. With your team, develop a list of questions you can use to help gather your information. Examples: What ethnic groups appear in the show? What ethnic groups are mentioned? What jobs do the people in the group have?

2. Have each group post their questions (or make copies for everyone). Develop one list of questions for the whole class. Try out the questions by having the class apply them to a brief excerpt from a popular television series. As a class or in teams, have students revise their questions. Either demonstrate how to use the questionnaire (i.e., "Think out loud" as you watch part of a show with the class), or have students practice as a group.

3. Have students watch one or two shows each night for a week.

4. Have students think, pair, and share (see page nine) their responses to these questions:

   a. What conclusions can you draw about the way ethnic groups are portrayed in popular television shows? Include comments on: (1) how often groups are featured and mentioned, (2) the kinds of jobs and activities the people take part in, (3) if the overall portrayal of the group is positive or negative, (4) if television encourages or discourages prejudice.

b. If the overall portrayal of the group is negative, what recommendations can you make for change?
c. How could you let the people in your school or community know about your conclusions and recommendations?
d. How could you tell television producers about your conclusions and recommendations? (Options might include letters to the editors of a school, local, or national newspaper, letters to the shows' producers, and letters to television networks and the networks' sponsors.)

5. Have teams act on the options they have suggested.

6. Ask your Peace Corps Volunteer about the way different groups are portrayed in the media in his or her host country. Does the media in his or her country make or break stereotypes?

Activity Variations:

- Rather than having students make their own lists of questions, use the worksheet "Watch It!" to investigate the portrayal of ethnic groups on television. Proceed as above.

- Complete the above investigation, and then share "Another Point of View" with the class. Discuss: What is the main point of the article? Are you surprised? Compare the article's conclusions with your team's conclusions. If the conclusions are different, how would you decide which conclusions are more accurate?

5. And Names Will Also Hurt Me (no worksheet)

Background Information:

> The following introductory activity illustrates what many students personally know but seem to easily forget: Words can hurt people, even if it's not obvious "on the outside." Special thanks to teacher Betsy Tamlyn, formerly of Far Hills Country Day School, Far Hills, New Jersey, for this suggestion.

Activity Idea:

1. You will need a banana and a long needle. The night before doing this activity with your class, prepare the banana by inserting a long sewing needle into it and "wiggling it around" so that thin slices are made in the fruit. Be careful not to damage the outside of the banana. Betsy strongly suggests practicing once or twice before doing it for your class.

2. "Introduce" the banana to the class. Point out its beautiful color and strong skin. Ask the class what would "hurt" the banana. Ask students if they think the banana would

be hurt by name-calling. Suggest they find this out by insulting it in the same way that they have heard others being insulted. (Use your judgment on the type of name-calling you want.) Have students "insult" the banana.

3. Ask students if they think the names "hurt" the banana. Ask: Does it look hurt? (Examine the skin.) What about on the inside? Slowly peel the banana and show students the bruised and darkened fruit inside. Ask again: Does it look hurt? Are you surprised?

4. Use think, pair, and share (see page nine) to debrief:

    a. What happened?
    b. Does this ever happen in real life?
    c. What did you learn about name-calling from this activity?
    d. How does this activity relate to our study of stereotypes?

Activity Variation:

- After doing the above activity with your class, ask students to write about times when they were called names. (What happened? How did they feel? What did they do?) Read anonymous excerpts aloud (Note: Check with the author first). As a class, discuss possible words or behaviors to use when people call us names, or when we are with people who are name-calling others. Have students role-play ways to respond to name-calling.

6. People Packages (no worksheet)

Background Information:

> "People Packages," an activity which illustrates the idea that "it's what's inside that counts," has been adapted with permission of the Green Circle Program, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Activity Idea:

1. You will need to prepare the following items ahead of time: two packages, one beautifully wrapped with something like an old rag or dirt inside, and the other plainly wrapped (in newspaper, for example) containing treats for each student.

2. Ask the class: Which package would you like to receive? What do you think is inside? Can you tell by looking at the package? As a class, decide which package to open, then dramatically unwrap it. Discuss: Are you surprised? Why? Could we tell from the wrapping what was inside the package? Why not?

3. Introduce the idea of a "people package" by describing your own "wrapping," i.e., "I am __ tall, have ___ eyes, and am wearing a ___." Have students describe their own "wrappings," or have students guess who is being described based on the descriptions given by their classmates.

4. Use think, pair, and share (see page nine) to discuss:

   a. How are people like these packages?
   b. Can you tell from the outside what people are like on the inside?
   c. How can we learn what is inside a "people" package"?
   d. What is the lesson to be learned from this activity?
   e. How can we apply this lesson to our study of the people in our Peace Corps Volunteer's country?

7. We Are All Special (no worksheet)

Background Information:

> Taking time to get to know something -- or someone -- helps us to recognize its uniqueness and worth. "We Are All Special," which illustrates this concept using a simple bag of potatoes, has appeared in different versions in many materials on prejudice and stereotyping. This particular version is from *International Connection: A Resource for Extension and Community Education Programs* (East Lansing, Michigan: International Extension Training Center of the Cooperative Extension Service of Michigan State University, 1989). Reprinted with permission.

Activity Idea:

1. You will need one potato for each student and a large bag.

2. Roll potatoes out of the bag and ask each student to take one. Ask students to examine their potato and then to "get acquainted" with it. Tell them that after a few minutes they will be asked to introduce their new "friend" to the class (or to a group of students).

3. Demonstrate what you will be asking students to do by showing your potato to the class and sharing a brief story. (You might want to focus your story on the physical characteristics of the potato, for example: "It has a bump because it was dropped on the way to the market," or "It is special because it has many eyes and can see in all directions at once.") Give the class one minute to get acquainted with their potato.

4. After the silent "get acquainted" period have students either write their introductions or verbally share them with the class or a group.

5. Have students put their "friend" back in the bag. Ask students if they notice any difference between the way they handle their potato now and the way they handled it earlier.

6. After the potatoes are back in the bag, ask the group if they agree or disagree with these statements: (1) "All potatoes are the same." (2) "All kids are the same." (3) "All of the people in the United States are the same." (4) "All of the people in (your Volunteer's country) are the same." (You may wish to introduce and discuss the term "generalization" at this point.)

7. Respond to the following questions using think, pair, and share (see page nine):

    a. What happened in this activity?
    b. Does this ever happen in real life?
    c. How are potatoes like people?
    d. What have you learned from this activity?
    e. How will this activity help us to understand the people in our Peace Corps Volunteer's host country?

8. Ask your Volunteer about the diversity of people and cultures in his or her village or country. What can we learn from the people in his or her country about getting along with others?

8. Fighting Words with Words (pp. 42-44)

Background Information:

"Fighting Words with Words" provides students with some simple tools to use when confronted with the prejudicial statements of others. The balancing statements and examples on pages one and two have been adapted with permission from *To Live in a Multicultural World* (adapted by Angene Wilson and edited by Cay Hartley and Cary Morse, Washington, D.C.: Youth for Understanding International Exchange, 1992). The balancing statements originally appeared in "Stereotyping" in the Intercultural Communication Series of the *Volunteers in Intercultural Programs* training materials (Youth for Understanding International Exchange, 1989).

Activity Idea:

1. Prepare for class by writing examples of sweeping generalizations and balancing statements on individual strips of paper. Tape each strip to a spool or a small block. Borrow a two-sided scale so you can show your students how balancing statements "balance" sweeping generalizations.

2. Review the meaning of *stereotype* and *sweeping generalization* with your students.

3. Place a sweeping generalization on one side of the scale, then balance the scale by placing a counter or "balancing" statement on the other side. Ask students to describe the purpose of a balancing statement.

4. Place additional examples of sweeping generalizations and balancing statements from "Fighting Words with Words" on the scale. Point out the particular strategy being used in each balancing statement you place on the scale (i.e., "This statement gives specific rather than general information," "This statement politely disagrees," and so on).

5. Have students work with partners to come up with the sweeping generalizations behind the balancing statements that are given in "Fighting Words with Words." (Example: If the balancing statement is "Really, I don't agree with you that all Guatemalans are always late. That hasn't been my Volunteer's experience at all," then the original statement could have been something like "Guatemalans are always late.")

6. Have students make a list of the sweeping generalizations they have heard about your Peace Corps Volunteer's country. Working in groups, ask them to come up with counter statements to balance each generalization. Share all of these with your Volunteer.

The Egg People

There was once a nation of Egg People. Everyone looked alike, spoke alike, even thought alike. And they lived in harmony. They never disagreed on a single thing.

And they especially didn't disagree on their feelings toward the Flatfolk. The Flatfolk lived on the other side of the hill. And they were -- well -- different. They dressed differently, spoke differently, and acted differently.

All these differences gave the Egg People very good reason to steer clear of the Flatfolk. The Egg People made sure that no little Flatfolk ever attended their schools or played with their children. That way the little Egg People had the same ideas about the Flatfolk that their elders had. They grew up thinking that Flatfolk were evil, ignorant people. The young Egg-ers simply believed everything they heard.

Of course the Egg People couldn't stay totally out of contact with the Flatfolk. Who would clean the streets or collect the garbage? After all, no decent Egg-er could be seen performing such work.

But the Flatfolk could -- and did. The Flatfolk swept the streets and picked up the trash. And since this was the only time the Egg People saw the Flatfolk, the Egg-ers decided that all Flatfolk were dirty and smelled funny. They also agreed that Flatfolk were naturally inferior because they worked at such jobs.

All Egg People accepted this general picture of the Flatfolk -- except one boy. He went away to a distant university where Flatfolk also studied. There the Egg-er fell in love with one of the Flatfolk. In time he decided to bring her home to meet his family . . .

What do <u>you</u> think happened next? Write an ending for the story here:

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The Egg People -- The Ending

This is how the author of the story ended the tale:

When word spread of the romance, the boy was condemned as an Egg-er outcast. A posse of Egg People came to his home and dragged him off to jail. They carried the girl to the edge of town and left her for the Flatfolk -- unwilling to even house her in the jail.

Meanwhile, all the Egg People agreed that in order to restore harmony to their village, the boy must die by stoning. On the day of the stoning, the entire village turned out. All were eager to see justice done. And though the boy begged for mercy, no one dared to speak out. The boy had to suffer so that all future generations would understand how horribly evil the Flatfolk were.

Think About It

1. Compare your ending with the ending the author wrote. How are they similar? Different? Why?

2. What lessons can be learned from this story?

3. According to this story, how do people become prejudiced? Do you agree with this? Why or why not?

4. One of the most important things to remember about prejudice is that because people are judged as a group, rather than as individuals, it is unfair. Underline the examples of unfairness you find in this story.

5. If you were a teacher, how would you teach people to be tolerant and fair in their dealings with others?

6. Rewrite this story so that it has a "fair" or "happy" ending.

7. Do you think the events of the story have ever happened or could ever happen? Why or why not?

"The Egg People" is from *Read* magazine, Middletown, Connecticut: Field Publications, 1979. Reprinted with permission.

What Is Prejudice?

In Europe, only about fifty years ago, six million people were murdered -- for no other reason than that they were Jews. And in parts of our own country, not very long ago, public toilets and water fountains were labeled "colored only," and "whites only."

So what is **prejudice?** The world itself means *prejudge* -- to *judge* a person or thing *before* all the facts are known. For instance, you hear there's a new girl at school who's Polish. And even though you don't know a single Polish person, you've always heard snide jokes about the Polish. So you decide instantly that you don't like the new girl. That's prejudice.

Prejudice points up the differences between groups of people. It mocks one group's language, another's customs. And it says *different* equals *inferior;* different is *wrong.*

Yet prejudice against nationalities is only one kind of prejudice. Other forms of prejudice punish people who have a different skin color, who are fat or ugly, and even who stutter. Think about it:

> -- You are an African American student whose father is a wealthy businessman. When you shop for school clothes, the sales clerk insists on showing you the cheapest slacks and shirts. *What is the problem?*
>
> -- You apply for a good position as a computer programmer. Another woman with the same education but less work experience also applies. She weighs 125 pounds. You weigh 225 pounds. She gets the job. *What is the problem?*
>
> -- You take part in an experiment in which factory workers judge the kind of boss they think you'd make based on their first impression of you. You've had a speech impediment since birth. As you are introduced to each worker, you speak with a stutter. The other two people in the experiment smile a lot and crack jokes. They receive twice the votes you do. *What is the problem?*
>
> -- You are a male junior high school student who likes to shop in a local department store. Whenever you walk through the store you are followed by a security guard. *What is the problem?*

You may feel that none of the above cases is fair. In each instance, a person was discriminated against just because he or she was "different."

Adapted with permission from *Read* magazine, Middletown, Connecticut: Field Publications, 1979. Special thanks to Dr. Bernadette Cole Slaughter of Indiana University of Pennsylvania for scenario adaptations.

But each of us is different in one way or another. And any one of us could be singled out and mistreated for one thing or other. In fact, there's no end to the reasons we can give for showing prejudice -- if we want to let our prejudices run wild. But we can also work to stop the spread of prejudice if we understand where it starts.

Prejudice Is Learned

Prejudice is catching. As children we learn it from the people around us -- just the way the imaginary Egg People did. We listen to other people's fears, suspicions, and hatreds. And we soon learn to share those feelings.

Even when we grow old enough to make up our own minds about prejudice, we often don't change our views. Longing to be accepted by those around us, we follow the crowd. Lacking the courage to speak out against prejudice, we go along with the majority.

Prejudice Is Useful

Another reason people retain old prejudices is that they are useful. Prejudice helps one group to justify its feelings of superiority over another group. The "superior" group unites its members with the common goal of keeping the "inferior" group out.

And the "inferior" group also makes a useful target for blame if something goes wrong, a trick called *scapegoating*.

Suppose a class visits a local museum. Instead of behaving themselves, nearly all the students joke and fool around, paying little attention to the exhibits. Their teacher, upset and embarrassed, cancels all future class trips. Suddenly the "in" students start putting all the blame on the class [clowns]. After all, everyone knows they're goof-offs and troublemakers anyway.

Your Prejudice Gauge

And how about you? Is it possible that you harbor feelings of prejudice against others? In case you'd like to check your "prejudice gauge," here are a few questions to ask yourself:

- Would you accept a date from an unattractive boy/girl?
- What country do you care the least about visiting? Why?
- If you could select your own race, religion, and nationality, which would you choose? Why?

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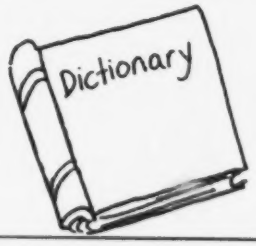
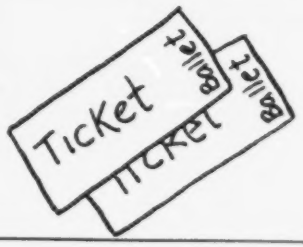
People Tags

Uncle Fred (member of a motorcycle gang)	Aunt Jennifer (librarian)	Cousin George (Navy man)
Great-Aunt Phyllis (senior citizen)		
		FACT CARD Uncle Fred loves antique furniture.
FACT CARD Aunt Jennifer likes modern fashions. The leather-look is 'in' this season.	FACT CARD Uncle George is looking forward to a career in the theatre after his navy tour.	FACT CARD Great-Aunt Phyllis has always been rebellious and daring.

Adapted with permission from *Cultural Sight and Insight: Dealing with Diverse Viewpoints* by Gary Smith, New York: Global Perspective in Education [American Forum for Global Education], 1979.

Prejudice and Language

What's the connection between prejudice and language? Well, *prejudice* means "to prejudge" -- we judge someone before we really know the person. And we might not make such snap decisions if certain language tricks didn't influence our thinking. These tricks cover up reality the way a mask hides a face.

On the next few pages we discuss three word traps -- *labels, stereotypes,* and *sweeping generalizations.* Then we give you a chance to see if you can recognize and avoid these traps.

Labels

The bell rings and you're on the way to English. As you push through the hall, you spot a tall, red-haired boy with a friendly smile. You comment to your friend that the kid looks like someone who would be fun to know.

"Naw," your friend remarks. "He's a dumb jock."

Instantly, the red-haired kid vanishes. Only a sign labeled *jock* hangs in the air. The boy may or may not have a good sense of humor. He may or may not be a good athlete. But you'll never know if you accept the sign your friend hung on him.

That's how labels work. When you hear a label, you have an automatic response, as if someone pushed a button in your brain. Images that go with the label flood your mind, and real thought stops.

The real danger of labels is that they rob the humanity from particular groups. And when people are reduced to a single, contemptible word, they can be treated in an inhuman way.

Labels are used in the following statements. What images come to mind in each sentence and why are these images unfair?

_____ is a geek.
_____ is a baby.

Stereotypes

How would you describe a librarian and a football player? Under "librarian" you'd probably list: *prim, hair in a bun,* and *constantly whispers "shh-hhh" to noisy kids.* Under "football player" you might put *stupid, muscle bound, ox.* If your descriptions match these words, you're thinking in stereotypes.

Stereotypes are simplified mental pictures of a type of person, a race, an issue, or an event. A stereotype lumps things together into one group and ignores their individual differences. For instance, all librarians aren't female, nor do they all whisper "shh-hhh." And many college graduates who run successful businesses were football players.

Because stereotypes mislead and simplify, they can have cruel results. Movies made in the 1930's and 40's often portrayed blacks as lazy servants, happy

From *Read* magazine, Middletown, Connecticut: Field Publications, 1979. Reprinted with permission.

slaves, or natural-born dancers. These images ignored individual differences among black people. They led to stereotypes that were very misleading and unfair -- and helped contribute to racial prejudice.

Sweeping Generalizations

Today's kids are lazy.

What's wrong with that statement? Since you're a teenager you should know that all kids aren't lazy -- and that the statement is unfair.

That's the problem with *sweeping generalizations* -- they pull a lot of separate things into one group and then say that all those things are alike. Teenagers all share one thing -- their youth. But beyond that they can be amazingly different. To say that all teenagers are lazy is ridiculous, and yet some people do.

When you hear sweeping generalizations, a red light should come on in your brain. You should tell yourself that no group that large could all be the same.

Would **you** be able to recognize a *label*, a *stereotype*, or a *sweeping generalization* if you heard one?

Activity Ideas

1. Look through a newspaper or magazine for examples of labels, stereotypes, and sweeping generalizations. Pay particular attention to advertisements and comics. Rewrite the statements you've found so that the labels, stereotypes and sweeping generalizations have been eliminated. If you found pictures or comics, explain why they are prejudicial, and then describe how you would change them.

2. Watch television for one hour each evening for a week. Note the labels, stereotypes, and sweeping generalizations you see and hear. Compare your notes with those of a friend. Are you surprised? Together come up with a way to make people aware of the prejudicial language you have seen and heard.

From *Read* magazine, Middletown, Connecticut: Field Publications, 1979. Reprinted with permission.

Watch It!

Your name _____

TV program you watched _____

1. Tell briefly what the show was about.

2. Which ethnic or racial group was in the show?

3. What was said about the ethnic or racial group?

4. What was positive about the way the ethnic or racial group was portrayed? What was negative about it?

5. In your opinion, why is a show like this on TV? Do you think it should be?

6. In your opinion, does this show make or break stereotypes? How?

7. How would you change the show so that it reinforces positive images?

Adapted with permission from *Teaching about Cultural Awareness* by G. Smith and G. Otero, Denver, Colorado: Center for Teaching International Relations, University of Denver, 1989.

Another Point of View

A core of overwhelmingly white producers and writers are "creating characters in their own image," producing artificial portrayals of blacks and other minorities on TV, a women's group has charged.

"Racial tension is commonplace in the real world, but virtually invisible among white and minority characters on entertainment television," concluded Sally Steenland, author of a Ford Foundation-financed study on how minorities are portrayed in the media.

The study *Unequal Picture: Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American Characters on Television* was released by Wider Opportunities for Women, a non-profit group.

Among its major findings:

- Nine of 10 minority characters are middle class or wealthy where "in reality more than 40% of minority men and 60% of minority women have incomes below $10,000 a year."

- "Most programs reduce injustice to individual conflict, denying the reality of oppressive social structures, except for a very few shows which present a multicultural world."

- Workplaces are portrayed as "egalitarian . . . with no hint of bias, even though whites are almost always in charge."

The study examined more than 150 episodes of 30 network television series featuring minorities in recurring roles.

Of the 78 minority characters on prime time TV, the study found that the overwhelming majority, 65 -- or 83% -- were blacks. Blacks account for about 55% of the nation's minority population, according to Census Bureau data.

Hispanics accounted for only 12% of the minority characters on TV while they compose about 35% of the minority population. Asians, about 6% of the minority population, constituted about 4% of the minority characters on TV.

[American] Indians constituted only 1% of the minority characters portrayed on TV. In reality, [they] make up about 2% of the minority population.

Article ("Portrayal of Minorities on TV Unreal") is from *Teaching about Cultural Awareness* by G. Smith and G. Otero, Denver: Center for Teaching International Relations, University of Denver, 1989. Reprinted with permission of the Associated Press.

Fighting Words With Words

We can do many things to act against stereotypes, both our own, and those of people we know. One easy thing we can do is to change the way we talk about other people, particularly when we don't know them very well. What does this mean? In our everyday discussions with friends and classmates, we can use words and phrases that give a balanced view of others. Sentences that give another point of view are called "balancing statements." Here are some examples:

1. **Think about or share opposite examples when someone makes a sweeping generalization.**

   They say: *Sri Lankans have long, straight hair.*
   You say: *Two of my Sri Lankan friends have short hair that's permed.*

   ---

2. **Give specific rather than general information about people.**

   My new friend from Jamaica enjoys rock music and country music, not just reggae. He is interested in playing in the orchestra, but he also wants to try out for the volleyball team.

   ---

3. **Point out the good or positive things about others.**

   When I was a Volunteer, most people in Nepal went out of their way to help strangers.

   ---

4. **Share cultural or ethnic information.**

   George isn't eating the sausages because his family practices Islam. Did you realize that people who practice Islam usually don't eat pork?

   ---

5. **Actively question (even just to yourself) the reliability of the source of information.**

   I wonder if John really knows what the Honduran people are like. He was only there for a week. Maybe he just had a bad experience.

   ---

6. **Politely disagree.**

   Really, I just don't agree with you that all Guatemalans are lazy. That hasn't been our Peace Corps Volunteer's experience at all.

   ---

7. **Point out that what may be true for some is not necessarily true for all.**

   I know a lot of people in Senegal are farmers, but they all don't live in the country, nor do they all become farmers. In fact, many go to the university and study for advanced degrees.

   ---

8. **Wait before making a judgment.**

   ***Think to yourself:** That girl seems really stuck-up to me, but I'd better wait to form an opinion about her. Maybe she just doesn't speak English very well yet. Or maybe she's shy.*

   ---

9. **Challenge a possible misinterpretation or prejudiced statement.**

   Maybe food in Cameroon is just different from food in the United States.

Practice Using Balancing Statements

1. What is a balancing statement? How can you use them in your everyday life?

2. Work with a partner to write examples of each of the kinds of balancing statements on pages one and two. Use situations from class or from your Peace Corps Volunteer's country.

3. Write a dialogue of a discussion that includes from three to five balancing statements. Practice reading it aloud with a friend as if it were a real conversation. Perform for the class, asking them to identify the balancing statements you've made.

The balancing statements and examples on pages one and two have been adapted with permission from *To Live in a Multicultural World* (adapted by Angene Wilson and edited by Cay Hartley and Cary Morse, Washington, D.C.: Youth for Understanding International Exchange, 1992). The balancing statements originally appeared in "Stereotyping" in the Intercultural Communication Series of the *Volunteers in Intercultural Programs* training materials (Youth for Understanding International Exchange, 1989).

Part 3: Culture

Background Information for Teachers

Activity Ideas

Worksheets

Background Information for Teachers

Culture and Society

To understand the concept of culture is to better understand the experience of the Peace Corps Volunteer. "Culture and Society" from Ina Corinne Brown's work *Understanding Other Cultures* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall/A division of Simon and Schuster, 1963, 1991), is a wonderful starting place from which to begin exploration of this essential concept. "Semantics and Culture," the essay which follows Brown's, introduces the relationship between language, thought, and reality. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

In its popular use the word culture usually refers to refinement or cultivation. The cultured person is thought to be one who is well educated, well mannered, and refined in behavior; who appreciates a certain type of art and prefers Beethoven to the latest hit tunes. . . . Culture has a different and more specialized meaning. It refers to all the accepted and patterned ways of behavior of a given people. It is a body of common understandings. It is the sum total and the organization or arrangement of all the group's ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. It also includes the physical manifestations of the group as exhibited in the objects they make -- the clothing, shelter, tools, weapons, implements, utensils, and so on. In this sense, of course, every people has a culture, and no individual can live without culture.

It is our culture that enables us to get through the day because both we and the other people we encounter attach somewhat the same meanings to the same things. Our culture is our routine of sleeping, bathing, dressing, eating, and getting to work. It is our household chores and the actions we perform on the job; the way we buy goods and services, write and mail a letter, take a taxi or board a bus, make a telephone call, go to a movie, or attend church. It is the way we greet friends or address a stranger, the admonitions we give our children and the way they respond, what we consider good and bad manners, and even to a large extent what we consider right and wrong. All these and thousands of other ways of thinking, feeling, and acting seem so natural and right that we may even wonder how else one could do it. But to millions of other people in the world every one of these acts would seem strange, awkward, incomprehensible, unnatural, or wrong. These people would perform many, if not all, of the same acts, but they would be done in different ways that to them would seem logical, natural, and right.

There are various approaches we can take to culture. We can look at it descriptively, that is, simply describe what it looks like, the form it takes. We can, for example,

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talk about the differences in material culture by describing the different tools used in getting food. We can compare the digging stick -- a sharp pointed stick used for digging up roots and plants for food -- with the short-handled hoe, the plow, or the complicated tractors, threshers, reapers, and binders, used in modern mechanized agriculture. Or we can talk about forks versus chopsticks (or fingers), or mats or hammocks versus beds, or moccasins, straw sandals and leather shoes, or bows and arrows, swords, spears, guns, cannons, or atomic bombs and guided missiles. All of these things represent different ways in which people have developed certain material objects which are used as means to certain ends. But in each case the material object represents an idea, not only an accepted way of making an object but an accepted conception of its use.

We can look at other aspects of culture in the same way. We can look at certain institutions that are found everywhere, such as marriage, and say that one society is monogamous while another allows polygamy, though the specialist will use different terms if he means plural wives or plural husbands. We can also talk about different patterns of classifying relatives, performing the marriage ceremony, handling a corpse, or approaching the gods or spirits.

But these descriptions do not in themselves help us to understand other peoples. We could compile a whole book of such descriptions and come out with the idea merely that other people are a queer lot who have never learned the right way to do things. A culture consists not only of elements or traits but also of their interrelationships and organization. Two buildings may consist of the same number of bricks of the same shape and size, put together by the same amount of mortar, and yet bear little resemblance to one another either in structure or function. Different cultures may have many specific patterns that are similar, but within each culture there is an organization or configuration that makes of it an integrated whole. This fact suggests at once that a change in one part of the culture affects all other parts.

The most profitable way to look at culture is to see it as an adaptive mechanism, that is, to see what it does. In this sense a culture is a body of ready-made solutions to the problems encountered by the group. It is, as someone has put it, a cushion between man and his environment. In order to meet their needs, people must devise ways of dealing with their environment so as to get food, clothing, and shelter. They must establish and maintain certain patterns of relationships, for in each society there will be males and females, infants, growing children, youths, adults, and the aged. They must care for the children and train them in the ways of the society so they may take their places as responsible members of the group. They must find ways to maintain the cohesion of the group and preserve consensus. In all societies the members come to have strong sentiments about various ideas, purposes, and goals -- the things we call values. And if men are to be willing to live by the society's rules, they must have some outlet for the expression of self and some way of relating to the forces outside themselves. No society limits itself to the strictly utilitarian. In all of them there is some form of art, music, dance, song or story, and

there are rites and ceremonies which, in the broadest sense of the word, we may call religions.

The resulting culture has form and pattern. There is a degree of order and system that gives to the people who participate in it a certain style of life that is peculiarly their own. It is not that the people sit down together and consciously plan these things. Most people accept their culture as "given" and usually they are not aware of why they do things in a particular way.

It is easy to see why there are fundamental likenesses in all cultures when we remember that all human organisms are essentially alike and that, by virtue of this fact, man's basic needs are the same. Moreover, man has essentially the same resources and the same cues offered by nature though, of course, these vary in specific ways. Everywhere man is dependent on land, water, minerals, plants, and animals. Everywhere he deals with climate and weather. Everywhere he has before him the forms, colors, and textures offered by nature. There is almost everywhere some sort of seasonal cycle of warm and cold, or wet and dry, and there is the day and the night. There is the life cycle of plants and animals. There is the human organism itself, male and female, and the developmental sequence from infancy to old age. And, finally, there is over him and around him the mystery of birth and death, of sleeping and waking, of dreams, of sickness and health, of the changing seasons, the sun and the moon and the stars. All of these and more offer to people the clues and the cues they need and use to build their cultures. No people uses them all and no two groups use them in exactly the same way. And so our cultures are alike in many ways, different in others.

Semantics and the Study of Cultures

The following essay from Seymour Fersh's *Learning about Peoples and Cultures* (Evanston, Illinois: McDougall, Littell and Company, 1989) applies basic ideas of semantics to the concept of culture. Reprinted with permission.

Throughout history, many writers in many cultures have called attention to the fact that words misinform as well as inform, but it was not until 1897 that a Frenchman, Michel Breal, created the term "semantique," or the science of meaning. More recently, in the 1920s in the United States, a movement called General Semantics was pioneered by Alfred Korzybski and subsequently popularized by researchers and writers, including Stuart Chase, Wendell Johnson, S.I. Hayakawa and Irving Lee. Borrowing ideas from these and other writers on the subject, we have drawn a

number of examples to illustrate the contribution an understanding of semantics can make to any study of other people and other ways of life. . . .

Some Applications

1. **No two things are identical.**

   For example, South American 1 is not South American 2 is not South American 3 is not South American 4. In other words, a South American teacher in Lima is not a South American rural worker in Brazil. Although by agreement we refer to the 275 million people who live in an area called South America as South Americans, the truth is that no two South Americans are identical -- including, of course, those who live in the same country or even in the same household. Considered in the same way, each of the estimated 85 billion people who have inhabited the earth has been unique.

   Statements which seem to talk about "a people" as if they were one entity must obviously be qualified. Questions such as "What do Africans think about Europeans?" are clearly unanswerable. Answerable questions -- those which have some likelihood of being verified -- are less dramatic and perhaps less satisfying, but that is the nature of the problem. It is only by taking liberties with language that we appear to be better informed than the data permit. Similarly, it may readily be seen that terms such as "African," "Muslim," and the like conceal differences as well as reveal group likeness.

2. **No one thing stays the same.**

   Japan of 1840 is not Japan of 1945, is not Japan of 1985, is not Japan of 2000, and so forth. Change is inevitable, though the rate varies. One who forgets this is certain to be shocked when confronted with the difference between what he thinks (or remembers) is true and what is so.

3. **It is not possible to tell all about anything.**

   No matter how complete a listing or how comprehensive an explanation, the possibility always remains open that something more might be said about the matter under consideration. All descriptions are "open-ended" with the last word unsaid. Completeness may be a goal, but like infinity it eludes mortal grasp. Thus, for example, an examination of any culture or any country might include reference to its history, its development, its achievements, and so on, but these would always be incomplete. No matter how extensive the treatment, a mental "etc." should be added to the last punctuation point. The practical effect of this orientation is to leave the door open, at least a crack, for additional information which may be forthcoming.

4. **The same word may be used to represent different "realities," while similar events or experiences are sometimes called by different names.**

   For example, a term such as *republic* is used to designate two very different political systems -- that of the United States and that of the Peoples Republic of China. A boisterous mass of people might be called a "mob" by a person opposed to the group and a "party" by someone who enjoyed being with the group. Other words, such as *radical, conservative, liberal,* and *reactionary,* often are used as labels. Words such as these whose meanings have become meaningless from being used to carry too heavy and too diversified loads of information should be set apart by enclosing them with quotation marks to alert the reader. Korzybski used to wiggle two fingers of each hand to achieve the same effect when speaking.

5. **Statements of opinion are often confused with statements of fact.**

   For example, verb forms of *to be* often cloud the relationship between subject and predicate, as when someone says, "It is hot." The "hotness" is more a description of the speaker's state of mind than it is of the temperature reading, since what constitutes "hot" is a matter of opinion. "Cold wave" could mean anything from 20 to 30 degrees below zero (F) in the Himalayas to 40 degrees above in New Delhi where, incidentally, a continuous string of days in the 90s in May would scarcely qualify as a "heat wave." Very often, the addition by the speaker of the words "to me" and the addition by the listener of the words "to you" helps to identify so-called statements of fact as opinions.

Some Suggestions

1. **Try to use descriptive terms rather than ones which express approval or disapproval.**

   For example, the words *clean* and *unclean* are relative. The comment that cow dung is used for fuel in many Indian villages often provokes reactions of disgust from many urban dwellers in the United States. It may be instructive on this point to quote from a Kansas editor, writing in 1879, at a time when buffalo and cow dung (he calls them "chips") were commonly used for fuel: "It was comical to see how gingerly our wives handled these chips at first. They commenced by picking them up between two sticks, or with a poker. Soon they used a rag, and then a corner of their apron. Finally, growing hardened, a washing after handling them was sufficient. And now? Now it is out of the bread, into the chips and back again -- and not even a dust of the hands."

2. **Try to use phrases that indicate conditions which should be considered with a statement.**

For example, awareness may be increased by the use of such phrases as "in our culture," "from our point of view," and "at that time."

3. **Try to move in the direction of substituting precise words for vague ones.**

   For example it is often said that "heavy rains" fall on India during the monsoon season. The statement would carry more meaning if it were pointed out, for instance, that Allahabad, a city in the Ganges Valley, and New York City both receive an average of forty inches of rain annually with the significant difference that New York City gets from two to four inches of precipitation monthly whereas Allahabad is hit by some thirty-seven inches within the months of June to October. The description of rainfall in "annual" amounts makes sense only when the downfall comes in relatively equal inches per month.

4. **Try to become alert to the ways in which cultural conditioning shapes our value judgments.**

   For example, historian Carroll Quigley reports:

   > We divide the whole range of colors, as found in the rainbow, into six colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet. With our background, we think a view is beautiful if it consists of alternating horizontal bands of green and blue, as in a landscape consisting of a foreground strip of green shore, a blue lake beyond, a farther shore of green trees and hills, and a blue sky beyond that.
   > But to a Bantu of dry Africa, such a view is a rather boring panorama of a single color, for many natives of that language-group place green and blue in a single category with one name, although they divide the lower red-orange-yellow portion of the spectrum into a larger number of basic colors, with names. That is why what impresses us as a beautiful view of shore, lake, and sky strikes them as a rather monotonous field of one color, whereas, conversely, an African view, which to us seems to be a dull expanse of semi-parched soil with dry grasses, may seem to them to be an exciting scene of many different colors.

5. **Try to recognize the degree to which the mind itself projects the kinds of answers it obtains.**

   For example, writer Carl Sandburg tells of the responses which newcomers to Kansas received from one of the local farmers:

   > "What kind of folks live around here?" "Well, stranger, what kind of folks was there in the country you come from?" "Well, they was mostly a low-down, lying, thieving, gossiping, backbiting lot of people." "Well, I guess, stranger, that's about the kind of folks you'll find around here." And the dusty gray stranger had just about blended into the dusty gray

cottonwoods in a clump on the horizon when another newcomer drove up: "What kind of folks live around here?" "Well, stranger, what kind of folks was there in the country you come from?" "Well, they was mostly a decent, hardworking, lawabiding, friendly lot of people." "Well, I guess, stranger, that's about the kind of folks you'll find around here."

6. **Try to avoid either-or evaluations, substituting instead the idea of a continuum which encourages answers expressed by "in-between" amounts when appropriate.**

   For example, in our culture we often ask questions about the weather, such as: "Do you think it will snow?" The form of the question seems to suggest that it will or it won't; either yes or no. But to [the Inuit], for example, "snow" is described by about 50 different names, each one indicating a degree of snow varying from blizzard-size to snowflakes. Each kind of snow is important in knowing what the "road conditions" for dog-sleds will be. Similarly, skiers have developed many new names to describe conditions on the slopes.

7. **Try to become more suspicious of our own "wisdom."**

   Anatole France once said of a man, "He flattered himself on being a man without prejudices; and this pretention itself is a very great prejudice.". . . Behind many "myths" are "truths" which have helped people to rationalize and maintain social order and organization. Thus, for example, the "superstition" held widely in many Asian countries that the left hand is "evil "or in some ways inferior to the right hand becomes more acceptable to the Westerner when he becomes familiar with the functions for which the left hand is reserved exclusively -- functions which he would readily agree were "unclean" and worthy of giving the left hand its "bad reputation."

Some Implications

Of course, much of what has been pointed out will not necessarily come as a startling revelation. None of these ideas are new, and many under different names, have been used by intelligent people who have never heard the word "semantics" let alone been exposed to the writings of Korzybski and others. . . .

No one is suggesting that all abstractions be distrusted. . . . Until we do give more disciplined attention to words, we will continue to stockpile symbols and labels while the precious commodities which are being symbolized and labeled escape our detection and comprehension. The argument-ending remark, "It is only a matter of semantics," must give way to the significant recognition that the "real" search for "meaning" may very well start where words leave off.

Universals of Culture

Over the years many anthropologists have developed lists of cultural universals -- functions which culture serves and which are found in some form in every culture on earth. This list is from *Universals of Culture* by Alice Cleaveland, Jean Craven, and Maryann Danfelser (New York: Global Perspectives in Education [American Forum for Global Education], 1979). It may help your students organize their study of your Peace Corps Volunteer's host country. Reprinted with permission.

I. Material Culture

- A. Food
- B. Clothing and Adornment
- C. Tools and Weapons
- D. Housing and Shelter
- E. Transportation
- F. Personal Possessions
- G. Household Articles

II. The Arts, Play, and Recreation

- A. Forms of the Arts, Play, and Recreation
- B. Folk Arts and Fine Arts
- C. Standards of Beauty and Taste

III. Language and Nonverbal Communication

- A. Nonverbal Communication
- B. Language

IV. Social Organization

- A. Systems and Governmental Institutions
- B. Families
- C. Kinship Systems

V. Social Control

- A. Systems and Governmental Institutions
- B. Rewards and Punishments

VI. Conflict and Warfare

- A. Kinds of Conflict
- B. Kinds of Warfare

VII. Economic Organization

- A. Systems of Trade and Exchange
- B. Producing and Manufacturing
- C. Property
- D. Division of Labor
- E. Standard of Living

VIII. Education

- A. Informal Education
- B. Formal Education

IX. World View

- A. Belief Systems
- B. Religion

Activity Ideas

Culture

For many students the word "culture" evokes images of glitzy theaters, somber museums, and exotic dance. For others it brings up images of native dress, foods, and ceremonies. But the things that people observe about culture -- behaviors and objects, for example --- are only the tip of the iceberg. The threads that hold a culture together -- its values and beliefs, for example -- are invisible and are only implied in the behaviors and artifacts of a people. These values and beliefs influence -- and are influenced by -- every aspect of life.

One of the best ways to come to an understanding of culture's influence on our lives is to interact with a culture different from our own. Although your students will not be able to board a plane to another country, they will be able to gain an understanding of the complexities of culture through the experiences of your Peace Corps Volunteer, and through the following activities.

1. What Is Culture, Anyway? (pp. 60-61)

Background Information:

According to Ina Corinne Brown in *Understanding Other Cultures*:

> . . . no custom, belief or behavior can be understood out of its social or cultural context. That is, any item of behavior any tradition or pattern, can be evaluated correctly only in the light of its meaning to the people who practice it, its relation to other elements of the culture, and the part it plays in the adaptation of the people to their environment or to one another. No custom is "odd" to the people who practice it.

In this reading for older students, author J. Bonstingl also stresses the role that context plays in giving meaning to specific aspects of a culture (i.e., its "culture traits"). "What Is Culture, Anyway?" is from *Introduction to the Social Sciences* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1990). Reprinted with permission.

Activity Idea:

1. Have students try to write while their thumbs are taped to the palms of their hands.
2. Introduce the concept of a system using the hand as an example. Discuss the interconnectedness of the hand's parts and the effect on the whole when one part is

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changed (e.g., "taped"). Have students give examples of other systems they know. Add the word "culture" to the class's list of systems. Ask students for examples of parts of the system of culture.

3. As a class, define the word "culture." Modify the definition after students have read "What Is Culture, Anyway?"

4. Ask your Peace Corps Volunteer how he or she defines the word "culture." Ask for examples of the interconnectedness of the culture in which he or she is living.

5. Have students work in groups to make a list of items they would include in a "culture box" of the United States in 1993. Discuss the difficulties of making generalizations about the entire country. Relate this to making generalizations about your Peace Corps Volunteer's entire country.

Activity Variations:

- Use a jigsaw puzzle to illustrate the concept of culture as a system. Bring in a completed jigsaw puzzle and keep it hidden from the class. Remove one piece from the puzzle, and pass it around the class asking the students to guess what the finished picture looks like. Record the guesses on the board. Place the missing piece back in the puzzle and share the completed puzzle with the class. Discuss: Was it possible to figure out what the picture was from only one puzzle piece? Would it have been possible to do with two pieces? ten? Why or why not? Ask students to read "What Is Culture, Anyway?" keeping these questions in mind: How are cultural traits like puzzle pieces? How is culture like a puzzle? Discuss.

- Have the class make a "culture box." Include pictures, tapes, and small artifacts, as well as the reason each item was chosen. "Bury the box" in a closet (to be opened on the last day of school) or send the box to your Volunteer after first checking with him or her.

2. How Does Culture Work? (pp. 62-63)

Background Information:

> This excerpt from J. Bonstingl's text *Introduction to the Social Sciences* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1992) introduces the concepts of enculturation and cultural change -- two ideas which your Peace Corps Volunteer should be able to clearly illustrate. Reprinted with permission.

Activity Idea:

1. Draw a large iceberg on the board (or bring in pictures of icebergs from a magazine).

Ask students: What do you know about icebergs? What makes an iceberg unique? Emphasize the fact that most of the iceberg is hidden from view.

2. Ask students to read the first four paragraphs of "How Does Culture Work?" in order to answer these questions: How is culture like an iceberg? What part of culture would be "above water"? What part would be "below water"?

3. Bring in pictures or objects that are examples of cultural invention, innovation, and diffusion. Have students work with a partner to find examples of cultural change in your school or town.

4. Have students work in pairs to find examples of cultural invention, innovation, and diffusion in your Peace Corps Volunteer's letters or in the Peace Corps' World Wise Schools *Destination* videotapes.

5. Have students work in teams to research the origin and diffusion of such things as gunpowder, tulips, paper, writing, spaghetti, potatoes, fast food, and television. Use world maps to show the route of diffusion. Ask students to relate the concept of cultural diffusion to the five themes of geography.

6. Ask your Volunteer about technological or ideological changes that have taken place in his or her host village. Have these changes been helpful or harmful?

3. A Special Pair of Sunglasses (p. 64)

Background Information:

One of the most difficult aspects of culture for students to understand is its influence on how we view the world. Culture affects our behavior; it also colors our perceptions. "A Special Pair of Sunglasses" uses the analogy of sunglass lenses to illustrate culture's role in perception. "A Special Pair of Sunglasses," original source unknown, has been adapted with permission from *To Live in a Multicultural World* (adapted by Angene Wilson and edited by Cay Hartley and Cary Morse, Washington, D.C.: Youth for Understanding International Exchange, 1992) where it appeared as "The Sunglasses Analogy." "The Sunglasses Analogy" previously appeared in *Planning and Conducting Pre-Departure Orientations* (Youth for Understanding International Exchange, 1985).

Activity Idea:

1. For homework, have students make a pair of sunglasses using recycled materials (e.g., cardboard from cereal boxes, plastic yogurt container lids, etc.); provide them with colored cellophane for the lenses. In class, discuss what sunglasses do.

2. Review the meaning of *values, attitudes, beliefs, assumptions,* and *filter.*

3. Read aloud "A Special Pair of Sunglasses." Use think, pair, and share (see page nine) to discuss:

    a. Who wore sunglasses in the story?
    b. What do the sunglasses represent?
    c. What happened to the traveler when he went to the new culture? Were you surprised? Why?
    d. Was the traveler like or unlike our Peace Corps Volunteer? Why?
    e. What did you learn about culture from this story?
    f. What advice would you give to someone who is planning to visit another country for the first time?

4. Ask your Peace Corps Volunteer about the way U.S. culture has influenced his or her perceptions of life in his or her host country. Ask what advice he or she would give to someone traveling to another country.

Activity Variation:

- If you have access to such cross-cultural simulation games as *BaFá BaFá* (for grades six through adult) or *RaFá RaFá* (for grades four through six), play the games and use "A Special Pair of Sunglasses" during your debriefing.

4. The Sacred Rac (p. 65)

Background Information:

"The Sacred Rac" is a clever description of U.S. culture similar to Horace Miner's classic piece "Body Ritual of the Nacirema." A tale with a twist, "The Sacred Rac" illustrates the influence of language in creating images. It should also help students realize that they, too, are part of a cultural group -- one that other groups may regard as strange. This version of Patricia Hughes Ponzi's work is from *Cultural Sight and Insight: Dealing with Diverse Viewpoints and Values* by Gary Smith (New York: Global Perspectives in Education [American Forum for Global Education], 1979). Reprinted with permission.

Activity Idea:

1. Explain the meaning of anthropology and the role of an anthropologist.

2. Read aloud "The Sacred Rac." Discuss:

    a. When did you realize what the "rac" was?
    b. How did you feel about being described as an "Asu"?

c. What values of Dr. Thapar are reflected in this piece? What values does he give the "Asu"? Do you disagree with him on any points? Why?
d. Imagine that you are an exchange student coming to live in the United States for a year. "The Sacred Rac" is one of your required readings. What problems might you have in getting along here?

3. Using this article as a model, have students write their own versions of how an anthropologist from another country might analyze an aspect of American culture. (Health clubs, sports events, beauty shops, and school dances are good topics to consider.) Share your essays with your Peace Corps Volunteer.

5. About Culture (p. 66)

Background Information:

> The graphic organizer "About Culture" can be used to help students categorize their ideas either about culture in general, or about the culture of one country in particular. Note that the material aspects of culture are on the left, and the non-material aspects are on the right. Special thanks to sixth grade teacher Carla Fletcher of Arlington, Virginia, for providing this activity.

Activity Idea:

1. Choose a key question for the center square. Examples: What gives a society its character? What makes my culture special? What makes our Volunteer's country special?

2. After reading your Volunteer's letters, watching a *Destination* videotape, and/or interviewing people who have lived in your Volunteer's host country, have students work in pairs to complete the chart.

3. Have students write essays in response to the key question using the chart as an outline.

Activity Variation:

- Have small groups of students develop a key question then use the worksheet as a plan for a group poster or bulletin board about your Peace Corps Volunteer's host country. Have students find or draw pictures to represent each aspect of culture. Share these with your Volunteer.

6. Thinking about Learning (p. 67)

Background Information:

> Learning about a new culture requires basically the same skills as those needed for learning any new task: observation, participation, research, and reflection. We can observe cultural events or films, we can participate in a festival or in a meal, we can gather information from people or print, and we can evaluate the quality and accuracy of the information we receive. This activity gives students the chance to learn about another culture, as well as the opportunity to reflect on that process.
>
> "Thinking about Learning" has been adapted with permission from *To Live in a Multicultural World* (adapted by Angene Wilson and edited by Cay Hartley and Cary Morse, Washington, D.C.: Youth for Understanding International Exchange, 1992). It originally appeared in "Ways to Learn about Another Culture" in the Intercultural Communication Series of the *Volunteers in Intercultural Programs* training materials (Youth for Understanding International Exchange, 1989).

1. Write these words on the board: *observing, participating, researching,* and *thinking about*. Ask for examples of each of these skills.

2. Divide the class into thirds: two-thirds will be learners, and one-third will be observers.

3. Teach (or have a student teach) the learners a new skill such as the steps to a dance. Ask observers to note which skills are being used to learn the new steps.

4. Use think, pair, and share (see page nine) to discuss:

    a. Which skills were used to learn the dance? Was one skill used at a time?
    b. Which skills does our Peace Corps Volunteer use to learn about his or her country? Which skills can we use to learn about a new culture?

4. Have cooperative groups of students choose a culture. Their task will be to learn about one aspect of their chosen culture using all four learning skills: observing, participating, researching, and thinking about. Their final task will be to teach the rest of the class about some aspect of their culture.

5. As part of the evaluation of their project, have each group complete "Thinking about Learning."

6. Ask your Volunteer to describe how he or she learns about his or her host country's culture.

What Is Culture, Anyway?

What comes to mind when <u>you</u> think of the word "culture"? Do you immediately envision art museums and concert halls, or do you, instead, think of examples of behaviors and values? As you read the following selection from J. Bonstingl's text *Introduction to the Social Sciences*, try to formulate your own response to the title question: "What <u>is</u> culture, anyway?"

Describing what is meant by culture is a difficult task, since the word is used in so many ways. You have probably heard people say, "She (or he) is a very cultured person." They mean that she or he enjoys going to the opera, ballet performances, and symphony concerts. That person may also enjoy works of art, such as paintings or sculptures. This is not how anthropologists use the term culture.

In anthropology, culture refers to the entire way society lives and is organized. This includes all the ideas, customs, values, norms, social institutions, attitudes, music and art, language, technology, and traditions of a society. Sometimes the term culture refers to several societies which have similar ways of life. For example, "Western Culture" is shared by the people of North America and the countries of Western Europe.

The culture is learned by every person born into a society as part of the enculturation process. Enculturation refers to learning roles in the society and becoming part of the culture. (Sociologists call this process "socialization.") As a person grows up, she or he is taught the culture by everyone in the society -- parents, relatives, teachers, friends, and even strangers. Every person starts out in life with a unique heredity passed on by his or her parents. In time, heredity and culture combine to make the individual fully enculturated. The individual becomes a working part of the culture.

Every culture is made up of many parts, called culture traits. These traits are like the small pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. When the pieces are all in place together, they make sense. The small pieces support each other and make the jigsaw hold together. But if some pieces are missing, or are replaced by other pieces that don't belong there, the jigsaw picture would be ruined.

These pieces, or culture traits, include: marriage customs, the appropriate thing to say or eat at certain times, the proper use of clothing, the behavior at work or play of a person in a specific role or status, and many other features of the culture.

Sometimes, people in one culture view the people in another culture as backward . . . or "not as good as us." This is called ethnocentrism or "culture centeredness." Ethnocentric people think that their culture is better than any others. They often think this way because they do not understand how the culture traits of other societies fit together to make a good, working culture. . . .

There is some wise thinking behind the old saying, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." What may be good in one culture, may be bad in others. Anthropologists know that in order to understand people in other cultures you have to change your mental sets to match those of the people you are studying. A

From *Introduction to the Social Sciences* by J. Bonstingl, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1990. Reprinted with permission.

swastika sign in the mental set of our culture [calls to mind images of hate and violence]. . . . A swastika in the Hindu culture of India means something entirely different. In that culture, the swastika is a sign for Ganesh, a major God of the Hindus. For the Hindus, the swastika is a sign which gives them a good feeling. Culture traits (like the swastika) get their meanings from within the cultures. Can you see why it is dangerous to analyze culture traits without analyzing the cultures of which they are a part?

What is appropriate in one culture is not necessarily appropriate in other cultures. . . . An American may consider it impolite or even unpleasant to talk with someone who is standing only a foot away. Yet, this is the appropriate "talking distance" for most people from Latin America.

Misunderstanding culture traits may result in hurt feelings or trouble. Can you think of any examples of this?

The first meeting of two different cultures is an exciting . . . situation. Eventually, both the cultures may get to know and understand each other. After a while both cultures may begin to accept each other's culture traits. This process of making the traits of other cultures a part of your own culture is called acculturation.

No culture ever remains the same. Every culture is constantly changing, or dynamic. Sometimes changes come from inside the culture. Sometimes the change is from outside the culture, through acculturation.

Every culture has smaller cultures inside it. These are called subcultures. A subculture has most of the traits of the main culture. It also has traits that are different from the main culture. One example of a subculture is the culture of the American teenager -- a subculture of which you are a part. . . .

Think About It

1. What is the purpose of this reading?

2. Have you learned your culture or inherited it? How would you determine whether this is true?

3. How would you teach someone about your culture?

4. Can you think of a time when you or someone you know has had to learn a new culture or subculture? What was difficult about the process? What attitudes, skills, and knowledge are important for learning a new culture?

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How Does Culture Work?

According to Webster's *New World Dictionary*, culture is "the ideas, customs, skills, arts of a people or group that are transferred, communicated, or passed along . . . to succeeding generations . . ." One of the most important things to remember about culture is that it is actually a constantly changing system rather than a single static idea. As you read the following excerpt from J. Bonstingl's book *Introduction to the Social Sciences*, ask yourself: "What makes a culture change?" Also ask yourself: "How have the changes in American culture affected me?"

We know that a culture is the total way of life in a society. Now let's see how a culture works within a society.

Every culture is made up of two parts. One part is the material culture, the things a society makes and uses. The material culture includes clothing, shelter, kinds of transportation and communication, and other things commonly used in the society for both survival and enjoyment. The material culture also includes the tools, machines, and knowledge of how to make things. This knowledge is called technology.

The other part is the nonmaterial culture, which includes the society's ideas and values. A society's rules of behavior, or norms, are part of the nonmaterial culture. The three types of norms are folkways, mores, and laws. A folkway, or custom, is an approved way of doing something politely or with good judgment in a particular society. Mores are very serious rules of conduct. In order to enforce these norms, societies make laws. Breaking a law in any society usually leads to punishment of one sort or another. Anthropologists call those behavior patterns that the culture greatly disapproves of, taboos. In almost every culture, murder and theft are considered taboos. Breaking a taboo can lead to punishment, being sent out of society, or even a death sentence.

The values of a society, including behavior and attitudes, become part of the culture through the establishment of folkways, mores, laws, and taboos.

Every child learns all this from the time she or he is born into a culture. The culture is learned in everyday living, while the child is growing up with people who are older. The first group which teaches the child the ways of the culture is the family. This is true in every society, including ours. The child is also taught the culture by others, including friends and relatives. (Depending on the culture, the child's relatives may be a part of the family unit, living with the child's mother and father.) In some societies, such as ours, the child continues his or her education in formal schools. Religion, which is found in every culture, also plays a big part in teaching the child about the culture. This whole process of enculturation teaches the child the culture and the roles one must play in the culture. . . .

Change in a culture does happen, but how?

There are many ways in which cultures change. Three significant ways cultures change are by invention, innovation, and cultural diffusion. You know that an invention is a new idea about how something can be made or done. An

From *Introduction to the Social Sciences* by J. Bonstingl, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1990. Reprinted with permission.

innovation is an improvement in a culture's technology. Many inventions and innovations are important because they satisfy a need of the culture. Throughout the history of the human race, such inventions as the wheel, the calendar, gunpowder, and the printing press have satisfied needs of society. Can you explain how? Once the inventions were accepted, great changes took place in society. Can you imagine what our culture would be like if those four inventions had never been thought of and developed?

Another way cultural change takes place is by cultural diffusion. This occurs when ideas from one culture are spread to other cultures. Paper, for example, was first used in China about a hundred years after the birth of Christ. By the year 1100 the idea and process of making paper had spread to Europe. Cultural diffusion may begin in a very simple way -- by people talking to each other. In the case of paper, Arab traders are believed to have encountered paper while traveling in China. They brought samples of the paper to the people back home, where it became popular. Then that same experience was repeated with traders from other areas of the world, until paper finally reached Europe centuries later. . . .

A recent example of cultural diffusion is the spread of fast-service restaurants. . . . Several companies are spreading the American innovation of "fast food" throughout the world. This is changing the way people around the globe think about food, time, and relationships with their families.

Diffusion of ideas and things from culture to culture is much faster today than ever before. It took the invention of paper over a thousand years to be diffused from China to Europe. Today, information about new ideas can travel that same distance in a few seconds. The use of satellites, computers and other modern technologies make it all possible. . . .

Think About It

DIRECTIONS: Recreate the following chart on a separate piece of paper. Add examples from the United States, your Peace Corps Volunteer's host country, and one other country or culture.

CONCEPT	UNITED STATES	PCV'S COUNTRY	OTHER COUNTRY
Material Culture			
Technology			
Culture			
Folkway			
Norm			
Taboo			
Invention			
Innovation			
Diffusion			

From *Introduction to the Social Sciences* by J. Bonstingl, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1990. Reprinted with permission.

A Special Pair of Sunglasses

Just imagine that from the time your country first began, everyone who was ever born (or will be born) was born with two legs, two arms, two eyes, a nose, a mouth -- and a pair of sunglasses. The color of the lenses in the sun glasses is yellow. No one has ever thought it strange that the sunglasses are there because they've always been there and they are part of the human body. Besides, everyone has them.

Take off your yellow sunglasses and carefully look at them. What makes them yellow are the values, attitudes, ideas, beliefs, and assumptions that all of the people in your country share. Everything that they see, learn, or experience -- whether in the past, present, or future -- enters into the brain through these yellow lenses. Everything has been colored by the values and ideas that have made the lenses yellow.

Thousands of miles away in another country, everyone who was ever born (or will be born) is born with two legs, two arms, two eyes, a nose, a mouth and -- a pair of sunglasses. No one has ever thought it strange that the sunglasses are there because they've always been there and they are part of the human body. Besides, everyone has them. Everything that the people in this country see, learn, and experience is filtered through their lenses. The color of the lenses in their sunglasses is blue.

A person who wants to go to that far-away land may realize that to learn about the country and the people more thoroughly she or he will have to get some blue sunglasses so that he can "see" better. When the traveler arrives, he wears the new sunglasses and feels he is really experiencing the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the people. He actually thinks that he can see wearing their sunglasses.

After staying for about two months, the traveler comes home to his own country and declares that he is now an "expert" on the country he visited. And guess what else the traveler says -- the culture he has just visited is green!

"A Special Pair of Sunglasses," original source unknown, has ben adapted with permission from *To Live in a Multicultural World* (adapted by Angene Wilson and edited by Cay Hartley and Cary Morse, Washington, D.C.: Youth for Understanding International Exchange, 1992) where it appeared as "The Sunglasses Analogy." "The Sunglasses Analogy" previously appeared in *Planning and Conducting Pre-Departure Orientations* (Youth for Understanding International Exchange, 1985).

The Sacred Rac

An Indian anthropologist, Chandra Thapar, made a study of foreign cultures which had customs similar to those of his native land. One culture in particular fascinated him because it revered one animal as sacred, much as the people in India revere the cow. The things he discovered might interest you since you may study India sometime in school.

The tribe that Dr. Thapar studied is called the Asu and is found on the American continent north of the Tarahumara of Mexico. Though it seems to be a highly developed society of its type, it has an overwhelming preoccupation with the care and feeding of the rac -- an animal much like a bull in size, strength and temperament. In the Asu tribe, it is almost a social obligation to own at least one (if not more) racs. Anyone not possessing at least one is held in low esteem by the community because he is too poor to maintain one of these beasts properly. Some members of the tribe, to display their wealth and social prestige, even own herds of racs.

Unfortunately, the rac breed is not very healthy and usually does not live more than five or seven years. Each family invests large sums of money each year to keep its rac healthy and shod, for it has a tendency to throw its shoes often. There are rac specialists in each community, perhaps more than one if the community is particularly wealthy. These specialists, however, due to the long period of ritual training they must undergo and to the difficulty of obtaining the right selection of charms to treat the rac, demand costly offerings whenever a tribesman must treat his ailing rac.

At the age of sixteen in many Asu communities, many youths undergo a puberty rite in which the rac figures prominently. The youth must petition a high priest in a grand temple. He is then initiated into the ceremonies that surround the care of the rac and is permitted to keep a rac.

Although the rac may be used as a beast of burden, it has many habits which would be considered by other cultures to be detrimental to the life of the society. In the first place, the rac breed is increasing at a very rapid rate and the Asu tribesmen have given no thought to curbing the rac population. As a consequence, the Asu must build more and more paths for the rac to travel on since its delicate health and its love of racing other racs at high speeds necessitates that special areas be set aside for its use. The cost of smoothing the earth is too costly for any one individual to undertake, so it has become a community project and each tribesman must pay an annual tax to build new paths and maintain the old. There are so many paths needed that some people move their homes because the rac paths must be as straight as possible to keep the animal from injuring itself. Dr. Thapar also noted that, unlike the cow, which many people in his country hold sacred, the excrement of the rac cannot be used as either fuel of fertilizer. On the contrary, its excrement is exceptionally foul and totally useless. Worst of all, the rac is prone to rampages in which it runs down anything in its path, much like stampeding cattle. Estimates are that the rac kills thousands of the Asu in a year.

Despite the high cost of its upkeep, the damage it does to the land, and its habits of destructive rampages, the Asu still regard it as being essential to the survival of their culture.

Adapted from "The Sacred Rac" by Patricia Hughes Ponzi from *Cultural Sight and Insight: Dealing with Diverse Viewpoints and Values*, New York: Global Perspectives in Education, 1979. Reprinted with permission.

About Culture

Government:

Clothing:

Shelters:

Things We Make:

Food:

Tools:

Language:

Arts & Recreation:

Religion:

Values:

Customs:

Knowledge:

Name: Culture Studied:

Team Members:

Thinking about Learning

Directions: With your team, answer these questions on the process you used when learning about another culture.

1. We used *observation* when we . . .

2. We noticed that we had the following *cultural filters(s)* . . .

3. We *participated* in this culture when we . . .

4. We *interviewed* someone from this culture about . . .

5. As we *thought about* what we were learning, we wondered about. . .

6. Several *questions we still have* are . . .

7. To *learn more*, we can . . .

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Some countries may be in development or temporarily suspended. 2/93